



Kibworth CE
Primary School

Let Your Light Shine

Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Policy



This policy was approved as follows:

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Document History

Version	Version Date	Author	Summary of Changes
V1.0	March 23	Hannah Dandolo Owen Morgan	New policy prepared following consultation with pupils, staff, parents
	September 2024	Hannah Dandolo Jessica Clarkson	Policy Review – No updates Needed

1. Commitment

Our school undertakes to refer to this play policy in all decisions that affect children's play. Our school is committed to providing the strategic and operational leadership needed to provide and maintain quality play provision for all of our children.

2. Rationale

Our school believes that all children need opportunities to play that allow them to explore, manipulate, experience and affect their environment. We believe play provision should be welcoming and accessible to every child, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, economic or social circumstances, ethnic or cultural background or origin, or individual abilities.

The OPAL Primary Programme rationale is that *"... better, more active and creative playtimes can mean happier and healthier children, and having happier, healthier, more active children usually results in a more positive attitude to learning in school, with more effective classroom lessons, less staff time spent resolving unnecessary behavioural problems, fewer playtime accidents, happier staff and a healthier attitude to life."*

We believe that our school Christian values of hope, kindness, peace, joy, respect, love, justice, forgiveness, patience, courage, koinonia and service can all be developed and represented through child-led play and a play provision that extends across all year groups.

3. Definition and value of play

Play is defined as a process that is intrinsically motivated, directed by the child and freely chosen by the child. Play has its own value and provides its own purpose. It may or may not involve equipment or other people.

We believe play has many benefits, including:

- Play is critical to children's health and wellbeing, and essential for their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Play enables children to explore the physical and social environment, as well as different concepts and ideas.
- Play enhances children's self-esteem and their understanding of others through freely chosen social interactions, within peer groups, with individuals, and within groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures.
- Play requires ongoing communication and negotiation skills, enabling children to develop a balance between their right to act freely and their responsibilities to others.
- Play enables children to experience a wide range of emotions and develop their ability to cope with these, including sadness and happiness, rejection and acceptance, frustration and achievement, boredom and fascination, fear and confidence.
- Play encourages self-confidence and the ability to make choices, problem solve and to be creative.
- Play maintains children's openness to learning, develops their capabilities and allows them to push the boundaries of what they can achieve.

The Benefit of Play

- Play allows children to develop their creativity and develop their existing strengths and challenges whilst managing an element of risk.
- Play allows children to develop and act out our school values. In particular, the values of respect, koinonia, courage and patience can be witnessed when child-led cross-year group play is encouraged.
- Play aligns with our school mission to develop children who are: inspired learners, good citizens, independent thinkers, have inquiring minds, are great friends and let their light shine.
- Play is essential for our intent for children to let their light shine by allowing them to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and balanced individuals.

4. Aims

In relation to play our school aims to:

- Ensure play settings provide a varied, challenging and stimulating environment.
- Allow children to take risks and use a common-sense approach to the management of these risks and their benefits.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop their relationships with each other.
- Enable children to develop respect for their surroundings and each other.
- Aid children's physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.
- Provide a range of environments that will encourage children to explore and play imaginatively.
- Provide a range of environments that will support children's learning across the curriculum and learning about the world around them.
- Promote independence and teamwork within children.
- Build emotional and physical resilience.
- Become responsible citizens through thinking creatively by generating and exploring relevant ideas, and making original connections.
- Become responsible citizens through working confidently with others, adapting to different contexts and taking responsibility for their own role.
- Become responsible citizens by understanding their responsibility to the environment.
- Become balanced individuals by having strong Christian Values to guide the choices they make in life.
- Become balanced individuals by knowing how to make friends, stay friends, and resolve difficulties.
- Become balanced individuals by knowing the importance of mental wellbeing and how to develop strong mental health.

5. Rights

Our school recognises the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes *the right to play, recreation and leisure* (Article 31) and the *right of children to be listened to on matters important to them* (Article 12). We acknowledge that we have a duty to take these rights seriously and listen to children's views on their play.

Our intent is to encourage children to develop into responsible citizens who are committed to democracy and justice for themselves and for others.

6. Benefit and risk

'Play is great for children's wellbeing and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.'

Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide (Play Safety Forum, 2012)

The school will use the Health and Safety Executive guidance document *Children's Play and Leisure – Promoting a Balanced Approach* (September 2012) as the principal value statement informing its approach to managing risk in play. In doing so, the school will adopt a risk-benefit approach as detailed in *Managing Risk in Play Provision: An Implementation Guide* (Play Safety Forum, 2012).

Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time at play. Play provision aims to offer children the chance to encounter acceptable risks as part of a stimulating, challenging and managed play environment. As outlined in the play sector publication 'Best Play', play provision should aim to *'manage the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children and young people safe from harm'*.

In addition to standard risk-benefit assessments the school will practice dynamic risk management with children, encouraging them to identify and manage risks in an environment where adults are present to support them.

We believe that by providing risky play we are enabling children to fulfil our intent of them becoming balanced individuals who know how to keep themselves healthy both physically and mentally.

We also believe that it is beneficial for staff to witness pupil's managing risk in order to understand their own capabilities and trust the child's innate understanding of their own ability.

Through the participation in risky play we believe that children are better able to adapt to problem solving and decision making in other areas of their life and develops in them a skill set which will extend beyond primary school.

Please refer to Appendix 1 HSE Managing Risk Statement

7. Supervision

The law requires that children in school have supervision but for primary school playtimes there are no stated ratios. During the school day there should be one or more adults present outdoors. The school recognises OPAL's three models of supervision: Direct, Remote and Ranging. Except for new children in reception, whose skills and orientation in the school environment need to be assessed, the school does not believe direct supervision is possible or beneficial. Supervisors will use ranging and remote supervision models, so that children can quickly find an adult and adults can patrol large sites to gain an awareness of the kinds of play and levels of risk likely to be emerging.

All adults in a supervisory role will have undertaken the essential playwork training. All members of the play team will be aware of the zones within the school grounds and use ranging supervision within these zones as necessary.

Communication with the line manager and members of the play team will ensure that a supervising adult is able to range within a zone at all times.
All members of the play team will continually assess risky play using the risk assessments and observations of “Is this safe enough?”

8. The adult’s role in play

The school will help children maximise the benefits they can gain from play by the provision of trained staff who are informed by and work in accordance with the Playwork Principles. Staff will use and refer to these principles when appropriate interventions are needed, and ultimately will strive for facilitating an environment that nurtures children’s self-directed play.

The playworker’s core function is to create an environment that will stimulate children’s play and maximise their opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. A skilled and experienced playworker is capable of enriching the child’s play experience both in terms of the design and resources of the physical environment and in terms of the attitudes and culture fostered within the play setting. Playworkers are a channel of access to new materials and tools and they can act as a stimulus to children to explore and learn. They are also available to participate in the play if invited.

Supervising adults will initially observe children at play to gain a good understanding of what is going on and determine if children are managing risk independently.
If play is deemed to be risky or working against our school values, adults can intervene with questions such as:

“Are you still having fun? If not, maybe you should play with something/someone else.”

“Have you checked in with your partner? Is she/he still having fun?”

“What would happen if you hit each other’s face/head/eyes?”

“Are you aiming below the shoulders?”

“Do you feel safe?”, “What would happen if...?”,

“What’s your next step?”

“Do you think that’s stable? How can we make that work?”

“Look around. Have you checked to see if anyone near you could get hurt?”

“Why have you chosen this spot to play?
Is there any spot in the grounds that has the same features (eg shade, privacy, slopes, mud etc)?”

“Do you know why this area is out of bounds?”

“Is there anywhere else you could play?”

Adults should keep in mind that any social conflicts and behavioural issues during play time are motivated by feelings of frustration or anger towards the many restrictions during playtimes. Instead of saying no, the play team will try to support the child's play and help them to work through solutions to continue playing safely and make better decisions in the future.

9. Equality and diversity

Through providing a rich play offer meeting every child's needs we will ensure all children, regardless of age, gender, race, disability or other special needs, can develop and thrive, build strong relationships and enjoy school.

10. Environment

We believe that a rich play setting should ensure that all children have access to stimulating environments that are free from unacceptable or unnecessary risks and thereby offer children the opportunity to explore for themselves through their freely chosen play.

We will strive to continually improve the quality and diversity of our school's grounds to enhance play. We will use the document 'Best Play' to guide us on what a quality play environment should contain. www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/pubs/bestplay.pdf

Children have a right to risky play and our environment needs to cater for these needs. The children need ownership of their play and the environment they play in. This promotes and love and care for their own environment that they play in. This will enable them to care for and maintain their play equipment with minimal adult support. Children's social and emotional development increases when they are engaged in high level, good quality play. Our environment helps cater towards these needs of the children. Children develop confidence in team building and advocating for their own rights when they have an environment which enables them to play successfully. Our play offer includes 2 large storage sheds with multiple spare parts (aiming for 4 pieces of equipment per child) along with water play, access the field all year round and a messy kitchen area. Our environment is underpinned by the belief that every child should have the right to play.



CHILDREN'S PLAY AND LEISURE – PROMOTING A BALANCED APPROACH

1. Health and safety laws and regulations are sometimes presented as a reason why certain play and leisure activities undertaken by children and young people should be discouraged. The reasons for this misunderstanding are many and varied. They include fears of litigation or criminal prosecution because even the most trivial risk has not been removed. There can be frustration with the amounts of paperwork involved, and misunderstanding about what needs to be done to control significant risks.
2. The purpose of this statement is to give clear messages which tackle these misunderstandings. In this statement, HSE makes clear that, as a regulator, it recognises the benefits of allowing children and young people of all ages and abilities to have challenging play opportunities.
3. HSE fully supports the provision of play for all children in a variety of environments. HSE understands and accepts that this means children will often be exposed to play environments which, whilst well-managed, carry a degree of risk and sometimes potential danger.
4. HSE wants to make sure that mistaken health and safety concerns do not create sterile play environments that lack challenge and so prevent children from expanding their learning and stretching their abilities.
5. This statement provides all those with a stake in encouraging children to play with a clear picture of HSE's perspective on these issues. HSE wants to encourage a focus on the sensible and proportionate control of real risks¹ and not on unnecessary paperwork. HSE's primary interest is in real risks arising from serious breaches of the law and our investigations are targeted at these issues.

Recognising the benefits of play

Key message: 'Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risk, but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool'.

6. HSE fully recognises that play brings the world to life for children. It provides for an exploration and understanding of their abilities; helps them to learn and develop; and exposes them to the realities of the world in which they will live, which is a world not free from risk but rather one where risk is ever present. The opportunity for play develops a child's risk awareness and prepares them for their future lives.
7. Striking the right balance between protecting children from the most serious risks and allowing them to reap the benefits of play is not always easy. It is not about eliminating risk. Nor is it

¹ The Courts have made clear that when health and safety law refers to 'risks', it is not contemplating risks that are trivial or fanciful. It is not the purpose to impose burdens on employers that are wholly unreasonable (R v Chagot (2009) 2 All ER 660 [27])

